

Collector's items in your little Red (or Blue) Book

By Roger Boye

PERHAPS the question asked most often by readers is typified by this inquiry from a woman in Galesburg:

"I am a cashier and have about \$100 in old coins I have saved the last 10 years. I do not collect coins, but would like to know if any of them are valuable. What books or pamphlets do you recommend to help me?"

Two of the most popular coin books are "A Guide Book of United States Coins" [known as the Red Book] and "Handbook of United States Coins" [known as the Blue Book], both by R. S. Yeoman. The Red Book, which retails for \$2.50, lists prices you could expect to pay when buying a coin. The Blue Book sells for \$1.50 and includes prices you could expect to receive when selling a coin.

The Red Book contains more explanatory information. For example, the book includes photographs of nearly every type of coin minted by the U. S. government. It also contains information about the history of certain coins, where to locate mint marks on coins, and how to determine the condition of a coin.

The book lists retail prices of nearly every U. S. government minted coin. For most coins, prices are listed for four or five coin grades or conditions.

Yeoman's two books are available at most coin shops and book stores. Since the books are published yearly, prices listed do not reflect monthly market variations, but are a general guide to the value of coins.

Coin prices are also included in numismatic periodicals such as The Numismatist, Coins magazine, Coin Prices, Numismatic News, Coin World, and Coinage. Most are available at larger newsstands.

Many coins shops also have in stock other books and periodicals on coin collecting. Some are general, like the Red Book, and others deal with a certain aspect of collecting. For example, two popular books which deal with the grading or condition of coins are "A Guide to the Grading of United States Coins" by Martin R. Brown and John W. Dunn, and "Photograde" by James F. Ruddy.

MANY PERSONS ask how much an old coin is worth. A man from Joliet wrote, "My

mother died recently. Among her things was a 1927 quarter. Is it valuable?"

Such a question is impossible to answer. The writer did not indicate if the quarter had a mint mark. The 1927 quarter without a mint

mark [coin made in Philadelphia] sells for \$35 in uncirculated condition. A 1927-D quarter [D for Denver] sells for \$80 uncirculated, and the 1927-S [S for San Francisco] sells for \$700 uncirculated.

Also, the writer failed to

indicate the condition of the coin. A 1927-S quarter in "good" condition [showing much wear] sells for \$5, a lot less than the uncirculated specimen.

The best advice for the man from Joliet is to buy a

book on coin collecting to learn about coins. And he may be interested in next week's column which will discuss what makes a coin valuable. More reader questions will be answered the following week.